SOME RECENT VERSE.

BOOKS BY ENGLISH AND AMERICAN WRITERS.

It is significant that the writer of English verse who has most recently and, for the time at least, most effectually gained the ear of the dilettanti, if not of a wider audience, is a compound of the most diverse elements. The author of "Wordsworth's Grave" is not a single-minded poet of nature like the subject of that ambitious elegy; nor is he in "The Eloping Angels" (Macmillan & Co.) the pure Byronic wit which he endeavors to be, in emulation of one of the keenest poetic intellects of the century. The latter work and the volume of "Poems" (Macmillan & Co.), in which all his previous verses are collected, provide the documents whereby the direction and character of William Watson's individuality may be ascertained. He is a poet of culture, and like the poet of culture rather than of inspiration he is self-conscious and moved by unrelated impulses. He would share not only in the return to nature which the Lake school inaugurated, but in the taste for epigram which survives to-day, less as a natural inheritance from the eighteenth century than as one form of literary enthusiasm for an age of more purely literary and artificial than emotionally poetic achievement. To these strains he would add one of such criticism as Matthew Arnold (by whose grave he has written some extremely well poised elegiacs) has given the world in the poem on Heine, and finally another springing from a source to which the poets of no time have gone with more assiduity than the minor poets of this present era go—the source of precious diction.

Of wilder birth this Muse of mine,
Hill-cradled, and baptized with brine,

he protests in one of a set of stanzas to Austin Dobson, an urban versifier; yet it may be said of him, as he has absurdly said of Arnold, that

The deep, authentic mountain-thrill
Ne'er shook his page.

His verses yield not an echo of nature's voice, but a description of it; and descriptive poetry is seldom the most musical. With Mr. Watson it is not melodiously rhythmic—and chiefly, it may be observed, because he has little emotion of the sort to communicate warmth and energy to his lines, little, in short, of spontaneous lyric impetus. Such an impetus will make a song out of a short verse and a chant out of an unrhymed epic. Lacking it, Mr. Watson has neither in his shorter pieces, like "Scentless Flow'rs I Bring Thee" and "The Lute Player," in the single ballad he has written, "The Ballad of the 'Britain's Pride'," nor in the dramatic sketch in blank verse, "Angelo," a legend of old Italian love and hate, the rich elasticity and cadence which would be most welcome in explanation of his vogue. That which does explain the willing attitude of so many of his suddenly acquired listeners is the grace of his verse. It has color, picturesqueness, and, though its movement is not new and finely rhythmic, it is smooth. It is not distinguished by the indescribable charm of the rarest poetry, but it has truth and it has a kind of rhetorical beauty. In one class of verse Mr. Watson's command of figurative expression is such as to warrant the candidature for the Laureateship which he has assumed. His most brilliant faculty, one less creative than critical, is for throwing into poetic phrases the thoughts germinated in contact with another mind, and accordingly his best poems are his elegies and addresses. He has understood Wordsworth, Landor, Tennyson, Shelley, Lamb and Coleridge, and he has written of them well on the whole. "Wordsworth's Grave" is a vastly overrated poem, but it is nevertheless an admirable literary criticism in rhyme. There is a really exquisite characterization of Shelley in the poem written for the latter's centenary:

And in his gusts of song he brings
Wild odors shaken from strange wings,
And unfamiliar whisperings
From far lips blown.
While all the rapturous heart of things
Throbs through his own.

It is a pity that Mr. Watson is ill content to bring his Muse stanzas like these, which are based on something about which he knows, but must wander through pages of tedious description and forced imagery in such a poem as "The Prince's Quest" (which means to be imaginative but is not to any extent), or must permit himself such a clumsy flight into the region of fancy as "The Eloping Angels" celebrates. This is described in a sub-title as a "caprice." It is very capricious, if not worse than that. Mephistopheles and Faust, in order to satisfy the curiosity of the latter, manage to obtain an entrance into Heaven through the connivance of two lovers there—two lovers who do not "love the life by other angels led," but desire to return to earth where there is the marriage denied them in Paradise and whence they had both been torn early in life. Costumes are exchanged, and, abandoning Satan and his victim in Heaven, the author follows his lovers to the earth, where he eventually leaves them to live eternally in blissful preference of a life indifferent to the selfish joys "which only idle angels" share. The evil-doers, stealing a brief experience of Heaven, conclude that the "entire felicity" of that place is dull. To meddle with the celestial mysteries is dangerous, and especially in the spirit indicated in the opening lines of this poem:

Faust, on a day, and Mephistopheles,
In the dead season, were supremely bored.

Byron was sure-footed enough to attempt this vein and to succeed. But it is only necessary to compare "The Eloping Angels" with "A Vision of Judgment" to realize exactly the distance between the former and good poetry. It is an effort to mix seriousness with levity, and without high imagination and sharp wit such a mixture is hard to make palatable.

The critical flaw in Mr. Watson's poetry is the under current of "pose" which flows through most of it, not obviously but no less unmistakably to a sensitive ear. It is the tribute he pays to the period. Nine-tenths of the younger English poets pay it with him. Even Mr. Henley, the apostle of virility, cannot escape the debt. In "The Song of the Sword and Other Verses" (Charles Scribner's Sons) there are traces of the same wrong-headedness which makes his well-known weekly, "The National Observer," the most affected enemy of affectation which could be desired by the prig which it scorns. There is a cultus of virility in England. It is the fashion among the illuminati to utter protests against prudery in language going as far as possible to the other extreme without becoming downright indecent, and then to sit back with an air as though satisfied with having vindicated man's threatened prerogative of being as manly—and as coarse—as he likes. No one outside the circle of "muscular literature" is deceived by this twaddle. Mr. Henley does not think it necessary to pause on the safe side of frankness, and more than one of his poems, the third of his "London Voluntaries," and the satire beginning "As like the woman as you can," are stained by coarseness. Almost as reprehensible is the burlesque high-and-mightiness of "The Song of the Sword" itself, and of the two poems in praise of insularity, the author's favorite detestation and his besetting sin—"We are the choice of the Will," and "What have I done for you England, my England?" To the portentious clamor of these outbursts the only retort is—Fiddlesticks. It might be wished that some friendly editor had excised them along with the other verses named above, and the smart but inflated and quite unimpressive "Carmen Patibulare." The book would have been thinned of a quarter of its scant hundred pages, but the poems left would not have suffered from being few. When he is not preoccupied with a fad for virility, Mr. Henley is capable of submitting himself to a lyric mood and of writing artistic and musical verse. The last third of his book is headed "Rhymes and Rhythms," and besides one beautiful fragment of blank verse, "Midsummer Midnight Skies," there are eight or nine poems which more than justify the second clause in the title, for they have a delightful lilt. "Why, my heart, do we love her so?" or "Gulls in an aerie morrice," could readily be set to music.

Sincerity would appear to be the surest safeguard against the banalities of "pose"; but Mr. Henley is not devoid of sincerity, and yet the stamp of the poseur reappears again and again on his work. When to sincerity is added the stress of an emotion raised to a white heat the pitfalls of affectation are scarcely ever to be feared. In one of her "Songs About Life, Love and Death" (Charles Scribner's Sons) the late Miss Anne Reeve Aldrich glances at the criticism which attributes the realistic effects of a poet to fancy and her songs of "love and passion" to her own experience; and the inference is that the spectacle sometimes provoked in her a satirical impulse. To one with as strong a feeling for art as her verses reveal it might easily be an irritation to have her art forgotten and her personality insisted upon. But from one end of Miss Aldrich's book to the other a note of introspection and strenuous passion is struck so persistently that it is impossible to regard her poetry as anything but the expression of a tense, high strung temperament. The poetry is not in many moods. It adheres nearly always to that which has been most perfectly described in the reflection that

The sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thought.

If there is a difference between the animus of these famous lines and that of Miss Aldrich's verse it is the difference between the mournfulness of a gentle spirit and the agonized throes of a spirit that feels with excessive intensity. Love and disappointment are Miss Aldrich's ever-recurring themes; but when she touches the latter, touches disillusionment and regret and despair, there is a ring of tenderness and of satisfaction in having loved, though in vain, mingled so inextricably with a defiance which seems to us peculiarly feminine that, in the long run, she leaves an impression as of having been in love with suffering and to have never spoken more truly than in the first line of one of her verses, "I am so glad to suffer pain." Love trampled in the dust, racked and bruised but still triumphant, is her continual inspiration. Her special good fortune was not to have had her balance disturbed; and while her work is charged with emotion, the virtues which are added to assist in justifying its existence are the virtues of precision allied to fluency, and a directness such as the ballad called "A Mediaeval Deathbed" exemplifies—a directness for which one is not altogether prepared by the tormented mood which prevails through the book. The "Songs About Life, Love and Death" are thoroughly lucid and clear cut.

In the dreamy atmosphere of the domain wherein her prologue implies that she found the substance preserved in her "Fair Shadow Land" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) it would not have been expected that Miss Edith M. Thomas would have fallen upon lucidity, but she has that quality, and when she recites some story, as in "Atria" and "The Prisoner of the Stansino," her verse also is clear cut as that of Miss Aldrich is, and she rounds out her metrical narrative cleverly enough. Her ideas, however, in the much more numerous verses which deal with nature are of no particular poetic charm either in themselves or in her presentation of them, and there is little in her "Shadow Land" to entice the reader. That which does most to prepossess the latter is the cheerfulness of the verse, which even breaks into humor in some triflings with Beranger, Spenser and Horace, and in a few more or less well knit quatrains. Sunshine is a natural excitant, and sympathy cannot help but spring up under the influence of a little humor. The spell of an abundance of it is more potent and lasting, and it is partly for this reason that Mr. Eugene Field obtains a hold upon the attention in his "Second Book of Verse" (Charles Scribner's Sons) and in his "With Trumpet and Drum" (same publishers) which one has no disposition to shake off. He, too, needs an expurgator, but not for the cause which has been pointed out in the reference to Mr. Henley's verses. With much of his serious verse suppressed (the verse of which "To My Mother" is a fair specimen), he would pass into the company of Bret Harte, with whom he possesses gifts of fun and idiomatic, neatly rhyming expression in common, gifts strengthened by refined taste and flashes of tender feeling. Books and the collecting of books, prints and curios, and the yearning for them of impecunious man, wine, and light-hearted wine-bibbing, the every-day happenings of a workaday, thoroughly human life East or West, but principally West, these things he treats in easy rhyme which makes no pretence to beauty or style, but which is endowed with the latter after all—for the style is the man, and there is a piquant something in Mr. Field's writing which could only have come from himself. It is the charm of a point of view and of a sympathetic nature touched by homely sentiment and by the things of childhood—of a nature with its aesthetic side—which goes with his humor to make both his recent volumes welcome. It is one of Mr. Field's chiefest claims to approval that he combines unaffected interest in children with a knack of rhyming about them in terms which are not deliberately adapted to juvenile ears, and yet must speak to them most persuasively. To win a young audience requires the most artless kind of art. Mr. Frank Dempster Sherman has attempted the feat in "Little-Folk Lyrics" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), a booklet of pretty, jingling pieces which give rise to suspicions of manufacture and a conscious unbending. Condescension to immature minds is of no use. The great recommendation of the anthology for children which Miss Agnes Repplier has lately compiled, "A Book of Famous Verse," (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), is that it is composed of the best serious poetry, of such ballads as "Rosabelle," and such songs as those Shakespeare wrote for Ariel, and not of professedly childish rhymes. The only adverse criticism to be passed upon Miss Repplier's book is that its arrangement is sometimes rather curious. It is disturbing to find "Rose Aylmer" between a Canadian boat song by Moore and the ballad by Scott just mentioned. But to the readers for whom the book was compiled this will probably not mean anything.

One distinction of the poetry of Mr. William Winter is that imprinted upon it are the signs by which it is possible to identify the poet of Tennyson's poem,

Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love

It is filled with the fragrance of a high ideal. The fine spirit of the first poem in "Wanderers" (Macmillan & Co.) maintains its sway through all the love-songs that follow it; it is in evidence in the melancholy verse which under the title of "Tempest" fills the second division of the book; and none of the remaining poems, poems of love and death, elegiac and commemorative, denies its influence. Mr. Winter's strain is softly blown. If there is rapture in his verse, as in the opening poem alluded to, "My Queen," it is never impetuous, but submits to the restraint imposed by an attitude pensive, self-possessed, and conscious of the decay underlying the bloom and loveliness of life. It follows that his poems have clarity, measure and the charm of polished workmanship. They have the charm also of feeling which is deep and tender; their accent is one of undeviating sincerity. The warmth of friendship, of generous admiration, of love itself, is a vitalizing force with Mr. Winter. It is felt particularly in his elegies, of which many have a singular aptness and beauty, the poem on Adelaide Neilson more perhaps than any of the others. And the English in which he writes is of as delicate a fibre as his thought. He is above all things fastidious. Another writer of commemorative verse, recently published, whose lines are felicitous and supple is Mr. Charles G. D. Roberts. His "Ave" (Williamson Book Company, Toronto) is one of the few good poems produced for the centenary of the birth of Shelley—fervid, musical, not rapid in movement, but with an unimpeded rhythmic flow.

There is modern romance in Mr. Madison Cawein's "Red Leaves and Roses" (G. P. Putnam's Sons); there is observation of men and flowers, of lovers and of the nature which furnishes the setting for their histories, and this much is good. There is more; there is a tale of the ancient chivalric time, "The Son of Evrawc"; there is a fragment about old Spain, "Torquemada"; some Eastern ditties are followed by a buccaneering song, and all this is sad stuff. At home, and moving amid scenes and thoughts to which he is linked by ties of essential feeling, Mr. Cawein writes entertaining, sometimes touching verse. There is a good example of the latter sort in "Wounded," a poem describing the return from the war on a litter of a young husband who had left his bride in the vigor of manhood, and to whom home now means rest where it formerly meant love. There is a delicate and strong touch in the implication of the transition from the "sweet nonsense" of youth to the sterner temper of the soldier's later years which his misfortune has brought about. But Mr. Cawein is most a poet when he is putting together rhymes about "the stormy drift of frantic leaves," or "the moon-flower and the wahoo-bush that burns," and dozens of other sights in the woods and fields for which he has a quick eye. His province lies principally within the range of natural phenomena. There he does work that in its minor key is worth doing. It is in the same province that Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson has composed some of the better pieces in "The Winter Hour and Other Poems" (The Century Company), a little volume of lyrics and occasional verses. In some of these last his muse shows a genial spirit and a sprightly gait—a poem to James Whitcomb Riley and another on John Burroughs are both animated, deftly pointed personal tributes. But there is more lyrism and more feeling for beauty in some of the passages in "The Winter Hour," which bear upon landscape and art or literature; in the poem on Browning's "Asolo," which contains some very veracious and skilfully calculated linear effects, pencillings of the lovely Italian scene; and in a sheaf of verses in which "A Spring Prelude"—beginning, happily, on the line "O tardy April, is thy full choir here?"—represents one of his most poetic moments. Those moments possess the grace that comes from a meditative and clear habit of mind, familiarity with books and flowers and an affection for them, and from a sense of rhythm. The rhythm in Mr. Maurice F. Egan's verse, of which a collection appears under the title of "Songs and Sonnets and Other Poems" (A. C. McClurg), is not hampered, but it is possibly chastened by the sobriety of his thought, which is penetrated by religious faith and is prone to manifest itself in utterances tinged with didacticism. There is a reminiscence of the Christian belief lurking sometimes in unlooked-for places in his book—in a sonnet on Maurice de Guerin, for example, that neo-pagan, whom he interprets as a kind of Theocritus coming "upon the Figure crucified" and losing his barbarous gods "in deep, Christ-given rest" on the bosom of nature. Whether or not it is the sedate temper of the themes appealing to him with the most force which is responsible for it, the fact remains that his verse is pedestrian whether it celebrates sacred or profane subjects; and only once in awhile, as in the song entitled "Like a Lilac," does it feel the quiver of a lyric inspiration, as faint as it is rare. Yet a contemplative bias need not of necessity withhold cadence from a poet. Whittier could sometimes put it into his verse. He has done so in the most perfect poem of the small volume called "At Sundown" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), which saves the last fruit off an old tree, in the "Burning Drift-Wood," for the stuff of which he laid faith and fancy under contribution and in which he has some of his most flexible lines. This last book of Whittier's gathers together but a few waifs in addition to the fireside monologue, his kindly greetings to Holmes and other friends, and a few inscriptions such as that written for the window to Milton in St. Margaret's Church, England. The text is given only on one side of the page, and there are some illustrations in good taste by Mr. E. H. Garrett. A book to which Whittier would have been glad to add, as its author remarks, a word of benediction, is Miss Lucy Larcom's volume of her old and new verse, "At the Beautiful Gate" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.). In this record of a faith which never falters, Christianity is explicit in nearly every stanza. The poems have the placid tone of hymns, which they really are, in effect.

Placidity like Miss Larcom's is hardly the dominant characteristic of such verse as has lately seen the light. It could not be more foreign to poetry than it is to Miss Aldrich's, for example, and yet if there is one thing for which it is futile to interrogate any contemporary writer it is a dramatic motive developed through any succession of theatrical crises in becoming diction. The passionate exclamation, or episode, may be dramatic in one sense, but it is not in another, in the sense which associates the drama with the stage. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell is evidently aware of this, and he prefixes to his "Francis Drake: A Tragedy of the Sea" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), a short note in which he avers that he has had neither the desire nor the intention to make of the tale he has re-handled from various sources an "acting drama," though on the next page he does not scruple to refer to his production as a play. Even granting some distinction between an acting drama and a play, it is not apparent that "Francis Drake" is the dramatic poem which its author calls it. This might appear to be due to the nature of the story, which, in spite of its tragic burden, unfolds itself quietly enough. Though Thomas Doughty, upon whose treacherous action while accompanying Elizabeth's great admiral to the Pacific coast the story turns, was discovered and beheaded there under curious circumstances, the approach of Nemesis was not along notably dramatic lines; it had little in it of the element of surprise; there was practically no conflict between any of the forces involved in the affair; and the conspirator went to his doom at the end of a train of circumstances which somehow made his death seem less like a climax than its picturesqueness would imply. The action in the story is slight. But the fault of Dr. Mitchell's poem lies deeper than the theme, which is, after all, not tame. It lies in the fact that there is no buoyancy in his work, not any of the energy best described simply as poetic. His tragedy is one of conversations, and when these are interrupted by a sailor's song it is plain from the absence of any music in the latter that it is only an expedient to relieve the monotony of the stream of talk. No poetic lines or phrases shine in the dialogue, and when Doughty's head falls and Drake closes the poem with a pious observation the conclusion is that Dr. Mitchell has done no more than tell an old tale in plain language, in another kind of prose than that of the original documents. If anything were required to bear out this judgment of his poetic powers, it presents itself in "The Mother, and Other Poems" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), a collection of verses which show that he is delicately ruminant, awake to suggestions in life and nature not prosaic, and yet, for all his facility in turning out rhymed verse, not a writer with a poetic gift. If Miss Harriet Monroe, whose "Valeria, and Other Poems" (A. C. McClurg & Co.) contains an effort more pretentious than "Francis Drake," has the poetic gift which could alone be her warrant for writing a five-act tragedy, it is not to be divined from her volume. "Valeria," the play which fills over half the book, need not be damned by the flatness of the very first lines of the prologue.

How tired the day is, and my head is hot—
So hot perchance the sun has sent his beams
To rest upon it.

It is but fair to say that Miss Monroe's verse is not all like that. But she puts into the mouths of her fourteenth-century Italians no other speeches which affirm them to be anything but the most distant echoes of the personalities which the men and women of those hot times really were. Once, at the end of the third act, there is a ripple on the still waters of the past, whose depths she has attempted to agitate by declaiming over the baffling surface; but the eloquence of her puppets makes very small thunder, and no sleeping hero of feudalism emerges to be galvanized, at least, if not recreated, into a performer of human interest. As a play, as a simulation of real life, "Valeria" is impossible. As a poem it is not any more plausible. Miss Monroe is on safer ground in her "Commemoration Ode," written for the dedication of the World's Fair, and in shorter verses like her "Slumber Song," which does not fall short, as "Valeria" does, of the effect desired. It must be added, however, that in these the author is decidedly on the ground. The flutter of the wings of poetry is not heard in them.

The volume entitled "Told in the Gate" (Roberts Brothers), in which Mr. Arlo Bates has given metrical form to seven tales of the East, illustrates a kind of verse which aims to be dramatic without adhering to dramatic conventions. The tales are not plays, but scenes. They celebrate incidents, little fragments of passion such as gleam in the chronicles of India and Arabia. Tempestuous love and hate are loosed in the episode to which "The Sorrow of Rohab" is devoted, and though the passage of the strange Oriental spectacle is brief, it is thrilling. It is thrilling by virtue of its own elemental facts. The versification of Mr. Bates adds no great stimulus to a reading of the history, but it is not sluggish narration, and there is cleverness in the preservation of a sensuous tone, suggestive of the East, through descriptions which, if they are very obviously the product of a Western pen, are not labored. Mr. Bates's verse runs on nimbly enough. That it does is for the reason that he is not lured into poetical side issues, but tries to reach the point with moderate speed, one important secret of success in narrative verse. It is a secret which has escaped Mr. Bryan Charles Waller, who attaches his name, one given celebrity in poetry by more than one ancestor, to a volume called "Perseus with the Hesperides" (George Bell). His mythology could not fail to be interesting. There is an endless fascination in the adventurous flight of Perseus and his capture of the Gorgon's head. In Mr. Waller's telling of the story he is prolix and commonplace. The verse passes muster until it is compared with the occasion. Similar defects inhere in the "Chronicles of Christopher Columbus" (G. P. Putnam's Sons), by Margaret Dixon. Through twelve cantos these "Chronicles" pursue the history of the discoverer. There is no poetry in them, and they are wearisome.

Some enthusiasm and much bad taste, a little aptitude and a great deal of affectation, go to make the volume of "English Poems" (The Cassell Publishing Company), in which Mr. Richard Le Gallienne endeavors to please, not the crowd, but the members of a few London cliques. There is a circle of young English writers who may be relied upon to applaud such a declaration as that

Our hearts made answering
Lightnings all that afternoon through purple mists
Of riddled speech.

There is another, the circle in which Mr. Henley is venerated, which will extol the "strength," "the fin de siecle realism and keen psychological analysis" of such verses as "The Decadent to His Soul." And there is another, confined to neither London nor New-York, fortunately, which will regret that Mr. Le Gallienne, who has some cleverness in verse making and an intelligence capable of appreciating refined things, should write rubbish. To produce trash is not a necessity laid upon the writer who is clever, but not a genius. Such a writer is Mr. H. C. Bunner, but in his "Rowen" (Charles Scribner's Sons), there are evidences of a dainty feeling, of a dainty touch, which make his cleverness attractive. Mr. S. M. Peck's "Rings and Love-Knots" (F. A. Stokes Company) are the merest trifles of cleverness, but they are pretty, and they have somewhere among girlish readers a small place which is not contemptible.

The late George Pellew was a young man when he died, and in the "Poems" (W. B. Clarke & Co.), for which Mr. Howells has written an introduction, there are printed less than twoscore of verses. The keynote to this small legacy is a seriousness which increases the value of the latter. Mr. Howells writes that Pellew "could not deal otherwise than importantly with anything he touched," and this is corroborated by the verse, which has the merit of high-minded thought expressed with ease, point and a trace of true poetic feeling. If it is only a trace it is because Pellew belonged to the race of writers to whom verse is a not unnatural or forced, and yet not an essential, inevitable mode of spiritual expression. What he did he finished carefully, conscientiously. He was not a lyrist, but neither was he without a sense of rhythm. There is nobility in his work and it is free from immaturities of either technique or sentiment. It deserved to be put into a book, and, though it is not remarkable verse, it deserves to be read. Seriousness, the peculiar quality of Mr. Pellew's work is, curiously, the leading motive in "A Book of Day Dreams" (Henry Holt & Co.), by Mr. C. L. Moore, who has thought out very earnestly the succession of one hundred sonnets which fill his book, and it impregnates Mr. J. I. C. Clarke's "Malmorda" (G. P. Putnam's Sons), a metrical romance. Mr. Clarke has laid the scene of his poem in the Ireland of the ninth century. There were romantic happenings in those days, romantic to modern readers, but the sounds of a fierce life reverberate in "Malmorda," which shows less of the sunny than of the gray side of romance.

The most important of late translations of continental poetry is that which Mr. Frank Sewall has made of selections from the works of Giosue Carducci. It is printed in a small volume of "Poems" (Dodd, Mead & Co.), which contains also two essays by the translator on the poet who is regarded as the laureate of Italy. It is important, however, for reasons touching Carducci's philosophy rather than his poetry. The former is well within the reach of a cultivated student of literature like Mr. Sewall. The latter must elude every one but a translator who is a poet himself. Only a poet possesses an English equivalent, which is also poetical, for Carducci's mellifluous stanzas. But in his essays and in his translation Mr. Sewall embodies the things which, married to his poetic inspiration, make Carducci's position in Italy. Put in a nutshell, the celebrated Italian's characteristics are those of a pagan born anew. He is the leading reactionary in Italian literature against the line of thought which created and sustains the papacy, and which he is fain to regard as an excrescence upon the really Hellenistic genius of the peninsula. He turns from the Christ to Whom he believes that Italy mistakenly turns, he turns from the God of Christianity to the god of nature, to great Pan. That in doing so he is obeying an impulse which his nation would obey also, if it could throw off the weight of centuries, is an open question. The decline of the papal power is significant, and so are many phases of the national life, the attitude of the people toward the Church; but there are other kinds of irreligion besides the Hellenic kind, and the shallow feeling of the masses may be referred to other causes than the renewal of a long-dormant pagan sentiment. It may be referred to conditions in the educational and political development of the country; and certainly, as Mr. Sewall himself concludes: "For Italy the day is past when Hellenism can fill the place of Christianity." Where Carducci's Hellenism redounds to the artistic benefit of his poetry is in the deduction from the former of what Mr. Sewall calls a classic realism, a realism which gives him not just the surface of nature, but the intense joy in its essences—the passion for the beings with which the amorphous heathen religions have peopled it, which belongs to the pagan and not to the Christian imbued with the emotions of his belief. Carducci is not, though, a mere echo of the early poets for whom he has a great admiration. He is an Italian as well as a Greek; he has a share in the present as well as in the past; and with the fine sonnet to "The Ox," a poem of pure delight in nature, Mr. Sewall has to translate a longer piece, "Carnival," which reveals the sensibility to human feeling without which the lines would be in vain. Mr. Sewall has chosen forty-one poems which serve very well to illustrate Carducci. He reproduces not much of the music, but he has not missed the sense, and his book will fulfil the purpose for which it was projected, that of making Americans acquainted with Carducci's ideas. The only other book of translated verse, which has reached us is "Heine's Lyrics and Ballads" (G. P. Putnam's Sons), by Frances Hellman, who has included in her volume a number of songs by Goethe, Uhland, Chamisso and others. The poems are handled with delicacy and taste, and show a lyric sympathy in the translator.

Into the "Love Songs of Robert Burns" (Cassell Publishing Company), Sir George Douglass has gathered most of the amorous verse of the Scotch poet, and he has given, in the form of an introduction, a paper on the latter's loves, which contains some interesting biographical writing. The book is published in the "Cameo Series," and is a well-made little anthology which recommends itself to students of Burns.

Two volumes of Mr. George Meredith's verse have lately appeared. One, "Jump to Glory Jane" (Swan, Sonnenschein & Co.), is a reprint of a bit of doggerel, possibly satirical, though the satire is skilfully concealed, for which Mr. Harry Quilter has a liking. He is responsible for the reprint. The work was originally published in his "Universal Review." There it might as well have remained. In its new dress it has been illustrated with pen drawings, but these do nothing to improve a piece of writing which it would be ridiculous to call poetry, and which has none of the qualities which make Mr. Meredith's prose interesting. "Modern Love" (T. B. Mosher, Portland) is another matter. It is a sonnet sequence to which Mrs Elizabeth Cavazza, who writes a "foreword" for the new edition, is justified in attaching some importance. It is an intellectual exercise of no small calibre. But we fancy it will require more than Mr. Swinburne's superlatives to make it endure as poetry.

LITERARY NOTES.

Mr. Joel Chandler Harris is keeping up his imaginative work side by side with his newspaper writing. He is engaged upon a novel which is to bear the title of "Aaron," upon a play, and upon a series of short stories. It is said that Mr. Harris never talks about his books if he can help it—a reticence which scoffers say is not common among authors.

Two more Balzac books, "A Great Man of the Provinces" (the second part of "Lost Illusions") and "The Brotherhood of Consolation" ("L'Envers de L'Histoire Contemporaine"), have been prepared by Miss Wormeley and are on the list of Roberts Brothers.

Mr. Arthur Sherburne Hardy is about to return to his duties as professor of mathematics at Dartmouth—not, however, severing his connection with "The Cosmopolitan." A large portion of the year he will spend at his desk in the editorial room of that magazine.

Professor Charles Eliot Norton gave some interesting reminiscences of James Russell Lowell in an address delivered at Cambridgeport the other evening. "In 1848," Professor Norton said, in speaking of their early acquaintance, "Lowell was not quite thirty years old, and was one of the pleasantest of men—as pleasant a companion as you could find, born, as some acquaintance of his has said, a bottle of champagne, and ahead of every other man, with such sparkling wit, with such lovely humor, which led him into utmost boyishness at times, and if you sat down with him nobody could keep the pace that he set. Pun after pun came from his lips, or some piece of humorous jest, or perhaps a pleasant story. I do not think I exaggerate it when I say he was the pleasantest companion you could have.

"He never could keep any money in his pocket. It burned a hole in it if there was anybody to be lifted by it.

"In the pleasant surroundings of his boyhood he went to college, enjoyed the Hasty Pudding Club, was made its secretary and wrote a good many poems and liked the reading of verse better than he did the learning of his lessons, and liked better to read in the alcove of the old library.

"He was apparently lazy and did not do his college work, and toward the end of the senior year he was sent to Concord. It was a source of great regret to him because he was class poet and he was forbidden to come back to read his class poem to his fellow-students on class day. It was in 1848 that he seems to have come to the high tide of his power. In this year he wrote most of the first series of 'Biglow Papers,' which everybody knows to be so bright and animated.

"He and I were friends for more than forty years, and I do not remember one single time when he was not my friend. We used to see each other almost every day, and I do not remember ever hearing him say anything that ever gave pain to any other human being. As I have said, he could keep no money and frequent demands were made upon him, and he must have redeemed four or five wives of some of the black population.

"His engagement was a long one, and it was not till the end of 1844 that they were married, and then they married a good deal on faith, and thought the ravens would supply them, and moved to Philadelphia, where he wrote for an anti-slavery paper for $5 a week."

The new "Standard Magazine," the periodical which, it is announced, Mr. James Clarence Harvey is to edit, is on the press and will soon present itself. The new monthly to be brought out by Mr. S. S. McClure will appear about the same time.

There is to be a Dante exhibition in London, the objects to be shown consisting of drawings by Botticelli, drawings by Rossetti, and medallions, photographs, maps and editions of the "Paradise."

Miss Lucy Larcom, whose gentle and musical verse is dear to many readers, is lying ill in Boston, and cannot, it is thought, long survive.

The widow of Richard Burton has completed her biography of her husband, but no publisher has yet announced it. It is known that Burton was an agnostic; but Lady Burton, it is said, has portrayed him in her book as a devout churchman.

The two volumes of Mr. Henry T. Finck's "Life of Wagner" will be brought out within a few days. It will contain various interesting portraits.

The literary excursions of Rider Haggard began with the preparation of divers magazine articles on South African subjects. His novel "Dawn" he regards as his first book. He declares that the idea of writing it was given to him by the face of a girl seen by him in a church. He had some difficulty in finding a publisher for this novel, and was obliged to rewrite it.

The Southern writers of fiction are condemned by "The Baltimore Sun," on the ground that they have too often found their profit in "catering to Northern prejudice." "This class of writers," "The Sun" says, "make their money by misrepresenting the real people of the South, describing imaginary classes of 'poor whites,' 'crackers,' 'mountain whites,' etc., as if they really existed, and pandering to the desire of unfriendly readers to see old enemies put in an unfavorable light. Exceptional monstrosities are held up as Southern types, to the great glee of the untravelled Northerner, who is led to hold the writer and his fellow Southerners in equal contempt. In historical writing recent Southern authors hold a high place, because they have written, as a rule, to vindicate the truth rather than to make money. Their books picture a people vastly different from the creatures our mercenary literati have created. It is in Southern newspapers and monthly magazines—written for Southern readers—that the Southern thought and culture of our day is to be seen in its real character."

Mr. Walter Besant is one of the English authors intending to visit the World's Fair at Chicago this summer. He will attend the literary congress to be held there.

Captain Mahan's "Influence of the Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire" has aroused "The London Times" to strong and well-deserved admiration. Ever since, it says, the publication of his book on "The Influence of the Sea Power on History," Captain Mahan "has been recognized by all competent judges, not merely as the most distinguished living writer on naval strategy, but as the originator and first exponent of what may be called the philosophy of naval history. By the professional student of naval warfare, moreover, whether in its strategical or its tactical aspects, the book will at once be recognized as an altogether indispensable textbook; for, while his grasp of strategical issues is almost unrivalled, and his insight into the philosophy of naval history is altogether unprecedented in naval literature, Captain Mahan never loses an opportunity of pointing the tactical moral wherever the nature of his subject-matter permits or invites him to do so. Though it might be an exaggeration to compare him with Adam Smith for reach of thought, profundity of insight, and sagacity of speculation, yet it is no more than the truth to say that the spirit in which he has approached the novel and fruitful study of the "Influence of Sea Power upon History" is not unworthy to be compared with that in which the great Scottish thinker approached the study of the 'Wealth of Nations.'"

Karpeles's "Heine," an autobiography compiled from the poet's writings, has been translated by Mr. Arthur Dexter, and the translation will be published by Henry Holt & Co. The same publishers are bringing out a new edition of Hillebrand's "German Thought."

THE CHRONICLE OF ARTS.

EXHIBITIONS AND OTHER TOPICS.

EVENTS MARKING THE CLOSE OF THE SEASON—ACADEMY NOTES—IN MINOR GALLERIES—THE SPITZER COLLECTION.

The season is drawing to a close, and practically all of the last events of any importance have been accomplished or are in sight. To-morrow the Society of American Artists opens its fifteenth exhibition and enters upon a prosperous season, in all probability, for the display is one of the best in the history of the organization. On Wednesday morning the American Art Association will open an exhibition of the late John Hoey's collection. In the evening of the same day the Metropolitan Museum of Art will hold its annual spring reception. The Academy will maintain its spring exhibition for four weeks more. It does not close until the 13th of next month, a date which leaves not too long a time between the present exhibition and that of objects loaned by collectors which the Academy proposes to hold this summer. The opening day of the latter has not yet been announced.

Sales have been pitifully few at the Academy. To the list of pictures disposed of which has been given in The Tribune only two pictures are to be added, "Violets," by Annie T. Burt, $45, and "Study of Bloaters," by Walter Douglass, $30. Total of sales to date, $2,000. The three Hallgarten prizes of $300, $200 and $100, each of which has not been awarded since 1889, are to be voted upon next Wednesday afternoon. More than ordinary interest attaches to the occasion. If fifty of the exhibitors assemble—that being the number required to make a quorum—and one work receives one-third of all the votes cast at each ballot, three artists will be made happy, for interest has been accruing upon the prizes for four years. We are ignorant of the exact figures involved, but the amount of the first prize is said to be in the neighborhood of $1,200, and the other prizes have been proportionately increased. What pictures the voters will hit upon is the obscurest of problems, but there is no difficulty in pointing out one or two men who deserve the encouragement of a prize. Mr. Henry Prellwitz is one of the most promising of the younger men who are coming to the front. There are hints of Mr. Dewing and of Mr. H. O. Walker in him, but he is without doubt possessed of original talent. His "Prodigal Son" is a charming design, and it is well painted. Mr. E. A. Bell is another eligible painter. "The Fire Dreamers," a picturesque interior by him, is new and clever. But to fancy that it is of any use to advise voters in a case like this is to imagine a vain thing.

Apropos of the Academy, it may be observed that the exhibit of sculpture there this spring is of little consequence. Mr. Hartley has three busts of fellow-artists, Mr. Dolph, Mr. Daingerfield and the late Mr. Wyant, specimens of veracious and respectable craftsmanship, and there is a portrait in much the same style by Mr. Edward Elwell, but the only striking piece shown is by a foreigner, and that has the defect of coarseness. The executive power of M. Adrien Gaudez, who has presented a plaster cast of his life-size figure, "The Nymph Echo" to the schools of the Academy, is considerable. He has put animation into this statue, and he has modelled it with the chic which is common in French ateliers. The spirit of the thing, however, is common. There is not the dimmest suggestion of ideality in the work. The statuette of a nude young reaper, resting on his scythe and drinking, by Mr. Beury, goes to the other extreme, and is a colorless, emasculated production, whose smooth, careful workmanship is its only merit.

The sale of the Knoedler collection has not denuded the gallery of this well-known firm, and just now it is as well furnished with paintings as it has ever been. One of these, only recently hung, is a large historical composition by Mr. Herbert H. Gilchrist, a son of the biographer of William Blake, and an artist unknown here up to the present time, save as the author of some interesting plates in the "Life of Anne Gilchrist." The subject of his picture is the entrance of Cleopatra into Tarsus. As an ideal portrait of the Egyptian Queen, the work is unsatisfactory. The recumbent figure in the centre of the composition is neither beautiful nor regal. But her surroundings are adequately conceived, and when his picture is considered as representing the decorative aspect of a sumptuous procession it is seen that Mr. Gilchrist's hand has seconded his conception in such a way as to leave a more favorable impression. The canopied throne upon which the queen reclines is borne on a barge. Beneath the level of the throne, on the lowest deck of the craft, are stalwart Nubian oarsmen. Dark-skinned women are grouped behind Cleopatra, and to the right of her a blond musician is seated, this last a graceful and comely figure, more attractive by far than the queen herself. All these personages are placed against a background in which the sea and sky appear and a temple crowded with spectators. The scene is theatrical and splendid. It is composed with admirable effect, and the coloring, in which gold plays an important part, is gorgeous and yet not too rich. The handling, however, is heavy, and the drawing lacking in precision and force. Cleopatra, the character on whom the interest of the picture hangs, is modelled with less success than any other figure on the canvas. As a whole, the picture reveals scholarship and a designing faculty, a fervid color sense and an imperfect technique. The idea is picturesque and eminently susceptible of artistic treatment. The expression is defective.—Two or three doors below Knoedler's, in the Delmonico gallery, there is a small group of foreign pictures destined for the Chicago Fair. One of the paintings which is worth looking up before its departure is "An Odalisque," by Carolus Duran. It is a small figure study, done five or six years ago, and is interesting because it shows Duran working without the harshness which is characteristic of his recent fashionable portraits. It is one of his better essays in rich, deep colors. Another minor exhibition uptown is one of some paintings by Mr. W. H. Hilliard. He has hung fifty-seven oils, landscapes done in America, England, France, Holland and the East, at Hall & Garrison's, in Twenty-third-st., west of Sixth-ave. He is a careful but not a particularly suggestive painter.

What M. Emile Molinier, in the catalogue of the Spitzer collection, calls the greatest sale of the century, will be begun in Paris to-morrow. Some idea of its magnitude may be gathered from the fact that, although it will continue during five days of every week, it will not be concluded until the middle of June. It will disperse one of the most remarkable collections of artistic relics of antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance which the world has ever seen. The French appreciate the event. With the generosity characteristic of the nation when matters of art are concerned the Senate has voted $100,000 to be expended at the auction for the benefit of the State museums. From the Messrs. Durand Ruel we have received a copy of the catalogue issued for the sale, a publication comprising two volumes of text and a portfolio of sixty-eight large plates. In the preface M. Bonaffe touches upon the late Frederic Spitzer's career as well as upon the marvels of his collection. Paris was his home, and his fame is the fame of France, but he was not a Frenchman. He was born in Vienna in 1815, and it was not until 1852 that he was installed in Paris. He began life without fortune, but his talent for speculation in objects of art amounted to genius, and throughout his career he was enabled to carry on Napoleonic transactions. When he entered the European market there was less enthusiasm for industrial than for pictorial and plastic art. The average collector was only beginning to awaken to the riches of the past in the fields of the armorer, the cabinetmaker, the ironworker, the artists in textiles, glass, enamels and ivory. These things had been prized and collected before, but Spitzer brought new life into the search for them. He was in love with his specialty, and knew it only as the expert who is an expert by instinct as well as by training can know it. He was interested in the antique, and one of the finest plates in the portfolio of the catalogue is of a number of Tanagra figurines, but the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were the eras in which he cared most to study and he came to know them intimately. He had an ideal. He wished to form a collection that would be encyclopaedic, that would illustrate the industrial arts of his favorite ages systematically, and with tolerable completeness. M. Bonaffe admits that other men prior to Spitzer delved in his province, but he adds, justly, that no one had ever approached the Parisianized Austrian in method. His house on the Rue de Villejust was developed into one of the most noted museums on the Continent. It was a miracle of arrangement. Spitzer was not satisfied with a classification of his treasures scientifically, by schools, nationalities and periods. He was an artist in feeling and he harmonized the contents of his mansion as an artist would have harmonized them. There are 3,369 numbers in this catalogue, but the mass of objects which they represent was disposed with such tact that the house was lived in and had nothing of the atmosphere of the merely curio-laden museum. For twelve years, says M. Bonaffe, it was the shrine of artistic pilgrims from all over the world. Gambetta knew it, he continues, and so did Liszt, but these celebrated names are only two in a host of others quite as great which were at various times inscribed upon the collector's "golden book." Spitzer died three years ago in the midst of schemes to augment his collection. He desired, with passionate energy, to make it a perfect whole, a unit representing certain times. To-morrow it begins to be scattered beyond recall. It is a cause for the deepest regret that no steps were taken to purchase it "en bloc." It should have passed intact from Spitzer's heirs to the Louvre, to South Kensington, to Berlin or to our own Metropolitan Museum of Art. Somewhere it should have been set apart, a monument of extraordinary character and value, preferably in Paris, but if not there then in New-York where after all it is needed most. American buyers will presumably be represented at the sale, but they can bring back only the smallest fragments. European competition promises to be more than ordinarily active. It is impossible to review in detail the fascinating pages of this catalogue and the plates which accompany them. They illustrate tapestries, faiences, bronzes, enamels, glass, iron and woodwork, medals and miniatures and dozens of other things, and they illustrate them in the finest examples. The text is eloquent and the plates, even in their monotone, tell a similarly impressive tale.